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ABSTRACT

The views of local education agency (LEA) evaluators tend to be underrepresented in the evaluation literature. This symposium was organized to fill this gap. The non-LEA symposium participants (Carol H. Weiss and Bruce Thompson) were asked to pose questions to the LEA participants (Steven Frankel, Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools; Freda Holley, Austin (TX) Independent School District; Carl Novak, Educational Service Unit 18, Lincoln (NE); Ellen Pechman, Orleans Parish (LA) Public Schools; and Floraline Stevens, Los Angeles (CA) Unified Schools). The questions addressed such issues as the role of the LEA evaluator, the impact of evaluation on LEA policy, the effects of budget cutbacks, careers in evaluation, evaluation use for decision-making, and evaluator credibility. (Author/BW)

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EVALUATION FROM AN LEA PERSPECTIVE:

PROCEEDINGS FROM AN AERA SYMPOSIUM

Chair/Discussant: Bruce Thompson,
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Freda Holley, Austin (TX) Independent School District
Carl Novak, Educational Service Unit 18, Lincoln (NE)
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Discussants: Eva Baker, UCLA
Carol Weiss, Harvard University

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Proceedings of a symposium (session #46.24) presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, 1982.

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Foreward

The literature on evaluation, both empirical and non-empirical, is extensive. Of course, as Cook (1978, p. 14) and Shapiro (1979, p. 1) note, the quality of the literature varies greatly. Nevertheless, the literature is at least extensive enough to begin to support synthesis of knowledge we have gained to date regarding evaluation (Thompson & King, 1981b). Furthermore, as Thompson and King (1981a, p. 20) observe, we now have at least the beginnings of a base of theoretical propositions about evaluation; these can now be used to guide, at least to some extent, the efforts of evaluators and evaluation researchers.

Despite the fact that the evaluation literature is extensive, it does contain one noteworthy gap: the views of LEA evaluators tend to be underrepresented in the literature. For example, evaluation journals, such as CEDR Quarterly and Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, infrequently contain articles written by LEA evaluators. Fortunately, Stalford (1980) has provided a glareing exception to this rule. On behalf of NIE, he has edited a set of papers written by five teachers, five principals, and five LEA evaluators, regarding their perceptions of evaluation and testing in schools. The compilation was originally disseminated by the U.S. Department of Education

as a paperback, and is now also available from ERIC.

This symposium was organized to fill, at least partly, the gap which still exists in the evaluation literature. The symposium was grounded in a premise that LEA evaluators have important insights to add to the knowledge gained from more formal naturalistic and simulation studies of the evaluation process. Consequently, the LEA symposium participants were selected to represent diverse backgrounds vis a vis geographic location, LEA enrollments, and the organizational framework in which each evaluation department operates. The non-LEA participants were also selected to represent diverse backgrounds vis a vis experience and evaluation perspective.

The symposium was presented in an innovative format. The non-LEA symposium participants were asked to pose written questions regarding "Evaluation from an LEA Perspective." The questions were mailed to the LEA participants well in advance of the 1982 AERA annual meeting. This document represents the proceedings of the symposium insofar as it presents the LEA evaluator's responses to the posed questions. Both the questions and the responses were developed independently by each participant, and served as the basis for more extended discussion during the annual meeting.

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(Questioner: CAROL H. WEISS)

1. How much of what LEA evaluators do is "evaluation" in the classic sense, i.e., the observation of specific outcomes of discrete educational programs? What else do LEA evaluators do?

(Respondent: STEVEN FRANKEL)

In our case, classic evaluations account for about 25% of our budget. An additional 25% is allocated towards management studies of the noninstructional aspects of the school system; about 15% goes towards standardized testing programs; another 15% goes to conducting fiscal audits; and the remaining 20% covers coordination of policy and regulations development and the development of statistical reports.

(Respondent: FREDA HOLLEY)

Most R and E offices do not really work on the discrete project basis implied by this question. In fact, I have a hard time dealing with this question from my framework. To me, evaluation is looking at data and making or helping educators make decisions to improve education. The Lyon and Doscher (1979) report, for example, said that most of these offices spent an inordinate amount of time on "testing" with the implication that they were not doing much evaluation. However, most evaluations done in school districts should and do involve student learning as an important program outcome measure. Therefore, a district-wide testing program is likely to feed into the majority of all evaluations conducted. Is testing just testing then or is it also an evaluation activity? Recall how much of many major research projects such as those on teaching effectiveness have been devoted to collecting such test data as a part of their project. No one questioned whether this was a research activity. In school districts it is both a way of evaluating students and programs and district achievement.

With the testing phase of an evaluation taken care of, evaluators then have most of their resources or staff time available for other activities of which there are multitudes. Of course, there is classroom observation, interviews, questionnaires, analyses, and reporting; evaluators are involved in almost every activity that has or can be described as evaluation. They also spend a good deal of time in our office in management activities since we have differentiated staffing. In our office, evaluators are administrators; they supervise staff, do personnel evaluations, order supplies, and so on. They spend a great deal of time just communicating other than formal reporting purposes: writing memos, providing inservice, talking informally to administrators, consulting. They spend an inordinate amount of time on the telephone just answering questions.

Since many evaluation activities also involve record keeping for various program purposes, this must also be accounted for. This, like testing however, often feeds into the evaluation making it possible to do more complex analyses taking into account the various factors on which records are maintained.

Finally, most of us also spend time just asking ourselves questions such as: What information is really important to our district? What kinds of questions that matter should we be asking that we are not? How does this data that we have make sense in terms of the way the system works, of the way learning occurs, of the way a program develops, of other national research?

_____, Lyon, C.D., and Doscher, L. (1979) Executive Summary: Evaluation and School Districts Reports. Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Evaluation, University of California.

(Respondent: CARL NOVAK)
In response to this question I have attached a midyear review of evaluation team activities proposed for our Board of Education (see Appendix A). The review emphasizes two trends: a diversification of the types of services that the evaluation team provides and a trend away from evaluation of federally funded programs toward support of locally funded programs. The two trends are related. The evaluation team was initially organized to evaluate (in the classic sense) federally funded programs. As our focus changed so did the services we provide. We still "evaluate" programs, but only if evaluation questions are being asked. Other kinds of activities the evaluation team is involved in include the development, interpretation and use of educational tests, community and staff surveys, support of curriculum studies, information processing and use, needs assessment, and any other "special" studies (which in a different setting could be called research). A list of 45 projects on which the evaluation team was working was compiled for the same Board meeting. The list included 20 projects that are best described as evaluation projects. The 20 projects accounted for 50% of professional evaluation time from September 1, 1981 thru February 1, 1982.

(Respondent: ELLEN PECHMAN)
I think it has been a well known but little acknowledged fact for some years that evaluators don't do much work at the program level which follows the rational models established in texts. When we have the luxury of working with a sufficiently evaluation-oriented and self-confident client, we are, indeed, able to approach the process of objectively examining programs in terms of outcome effectiveness; but this occurs too infrequently. The discussants on this panel represent a range of school districts in this regard. Some of us are from districts that have had a sophisticated research orientation for quite some time, and evaluation is a more accepted process. Others, like me, work in districts whose history and politics make it difficult to undertake the self-analysis which can be conducted in educational climates that are more homogeneous or, at least, politically less volatile. I believe that systems are like people--the greater the success, self-assurance and confidence, the more possible it is to be self-critical.

But, if we don't evaluate in the traditional sense, what do we do? Sixteen percent of my departmental budget goes towards program evaluation and, of this, we are only evaluating one district initiated program. The evaluation staff works almost exclusively with externally funded programs and provides supportive technical assistance to school principals, project directors and grants developers on the evaluation components in their proposals. Nineteen percent of our budget is directed toward the systemwide testing program which is evaluation, but in the narrowest sense. The bulk of the remaining budget supports the massive student data, scheduling and mark reporting system in the district, and the census and state and federal reporting activities which also eminate from my office.

In the past two years I have been able to put some additional staff rresources (three part-time professionals, equal to about 5% of the budget) into hiring personnel who have highly technical research and data analysis skills. This group

is beginning to serve as a policy information support group for top management. This staff works with aggregate program data which are easily obtainable through the routine channels of system accountability or from quick surveys that respond to requests to conduct one-shot studies for top management. In a few rare cases, we are also able to help principals by pulling the descriptive data about their school, such as its achievement profile, or we help produce descriptive data their teachers can use for program analyses. Among our activities of this type are several systemwide needs assessments, one of computer needs and the other of test needs; a data based model for selecting high need schools in which to establish experimental first grades; and, finally, an analysis of the test data pattern of a school which appeared to have inflated test scores. These pieces of research are very supportive to the system, but they are not very flashy and can hardly be called evaluation. Although evaluation in the traditional sense is not often done, we think we have been increasingly effective in providing important supportive data for managers to use in their planning and decision-making.

(Respondent: FLORALINE STEVENS)
My perspective can only come from my experience as an evaluation administrator in a large urban school district. I would say that LEA evaluators devote about one-third of their time to "evaluation." A good portion of their time is spent with federal and state compliance surveys and the administration of testing programs--norm-referenced, criterion-referenced and competency. LEA evaluators attend many meetings serving as resource persons. They write many directional bulletins to schools and offices about how to fill out survey forms, conduct testing and so forth!

(Questioner: CAROL H. WEISS)

2. What kinds of impacts have evaluation reports had on LEA policy and practice? What conditions have been conducive to greater impact? For example, has continuity of evaluator service been a factor, or personal relationships between evaluators and decision makers, or oral informal conversations, or propinquity of office location, or salience of the issues addressed in evaluation studies? Is the scientific quality of evaluation an important factor in generating attention?

(Respondent: STEVEN FRANKEL)

Our reports have had considerable impact in about one-third of the cases. This impact has been evidenced by programs being expanded, modified or cut back largely on the basis of the results. In another third of the cases, the results and recommendations have been largely ignored. In the remaining third, the evaluation did not come up with findings which justified modifications in the existing programs.

The most important factors in determining our impact have been: 1) Our staff is regarded as being competent and evenhanded; 2) We report directly to the superintendent and are therefore outside the span of control of any of the program managers; and 3) All of our reports are automatically transmitted to the Board of Education and made public.

Scientific quality must be a given in that your constituents must be confident that your reports can be subjected to outside scrutiny. In most cases, we will not be asked to do a study unless the topic is very controversial. This means no matter what we find and recommend, there will be a considerable body of people who look to discredit the results.

However, elaborate statistical techniques or designs are often counter-productive. Their impact on cost and timeliness are seldom justified by what they add to a study. For the most part, we rely on straightforward procedures which can be conducted with a minimum of risk. This is because, in addition to accuracy, the next most desired attribute is timeliness. The best study in the world is useless if it surfaces after the Board or County Council has voted on a program's future.

(Respondent: FREDA HOLLEY)

Perhaps the best description of the sometimes difficult to observe link between evaluation and practice I have heard came not from an evaluator, but from a Mexican American program administrator when asked a similar question in a presentation about Title I evaluation. He said that now when he walks into a classroom or a school with a low socio-economic population in just about any school in our state and asks how the children are doing, he isn't told anymore "just fine." Rather he receives specifics in terms of test scores and growth from the last year to the present. When he asks if the Title I program is helping, he gets specific answers also about average growth, hours of service, and types of programs.

What the administrator is saying and what I have observed is that you see the change over time; in retrospect the change may be dramatic, but from close-up you may not even be aware of it. Evaluation does make a difference but capturing the difference is difficult. There are times, of course, when you do see immediate improvement. I tried to give some examples in my article in the Stalford

collection (see bibliography in the Forward of these proceedings).

I have also said at various times that the impact an evaluation is likely to have may be due to an array of factors, the most significant of which are the importance and relevance of the evaluation findings, first, and to the perseverance and salesmanship of the evaluator, second.

Although "scientific quality" per se would not be the way I would phrase it, the certainty of the finding does play an important role in generating attention and inspiring confidence for utilization and that is associated with the tightness and quality of the design. I have been asked if evaluators really need sophisticated statistical skills. The assumption behind this question is that most evaluation work is not very sophisticated. But I believe that is the chicken-egg dilemma. I find that where staff have more sophisticated skills, these skills get exercised. I think we in school evaluation continuously face very complex questions--far more complex than are encountered in laboratory situations--whose answers we cannot supply or supply inadequately either because our skill or the state-of-the-art itself is inadequate to the challenge.

(Respondent: CARL NOVAK)
Unfortunately the scientific quality of a particular evaluation is not an important factor in determining the perceived value of the evaluation. More important factors are the salience of the programs and issues addressed, the extent to which the results focus on what are perceived to be the key aspects of the program, the extent to which procedures are perceived as fair (not biasedly representing any one point of view), the personal credibility of the evaluator and the credibility of the evaluation unit.

The professional relationship between the evaluator and decision maker is also important (much more so than a personal relationship). In my estimation the most effective format for presenting results and maximizing the potential use of results is a short informal presentation by the evaluator to a group of key decision makers (two or more) followed by unstructured discussion of the program and the issue surrounding the program. This format allows decision makers to focus on those aspects of the program that they feel are most important (both pro and con). The role of the evaluator is to relate the results of the evaluation to those issues.

(Respondent: ELLEN PECHMAN)
In our case, I must candidly acknowledge that evaluation reports, as such, have had little or any direct impact on policy or practice in the district. Ironically, I think the most interesting and most direct impact evaluation has had is in molding behavior and encouraging accountability through the threat of evaluation. This is instrumental evaluation in a very unusual sense!

Most of the evaluations we have conducted over the years have been mandated reports which describe, in routine format and carefully worded neutrality, the superficial elements of the programs, i.e., the number of participants, whether meetings were held as planned, that parents or teachers came to meetings, and reports of test scores. However, we have several notable examples of programs getting underway several months earlier than they might have, had the evaluator not proded the system. Furthermore, several programs have been quick to report their own data to Board members and superintendents to prove they didn't need to

be evaluated!

This year, I think, we will have the first opportunity in a long time to provide direct evaluative assistance for planning to an important districtwide program. Not surprisingly, this is a sensitive and controversial program in the district which most people think the superintendent would like to see disappear. Our data on this program largely consists of reports from teachers, administrators and students. Except for the results of a normed test of basic reading and math skills, we still have been unable to obtain sufficient access to the program to collect observational data on behavior or to conduct pre- and post-tests of specific skill achievement among students. Nonetheless, the kind of descriptive reporting we are doing has not been done before in our district and I think it will be helpful to program managers who are planning for next year.

To answer Carol Weiss' question more directly, I think all of the factors she mentioned in her questions are important to the success of evaluations and evaluation relationships. Each one will be more or less important depending upon the political and program context, and the people involved. In my experience, the issue of scientific quality is probably the least important factor in the evaluation process or product. Technical quality is an issue for our peers in the evaluation community but, in the school setting, it is rare that evaluation users are professionally interested or experienced enough to be very analytical about the technical elements of an evaluation. Regardless of how technically correct or effective an evaluation is, it will only be used if the results coincide with the intuitions of the significant decision-makers or constituencies. Of course, the report for each audience (user) is absolutely essential, but I also think that it is relatively easy to design reports to meet users' needs. It just requires that the evaluator be sensitive and open to "lay" suggestions about formating and writing up findings.

One factor affecting impact of evaluations in LEA's which was not mentioned in the question is administrative clout. In some ways this is obvious, but I haven't seen it discussed directly in the literature. The rational model of evaluation suggests that clout will come with evaluation quality, but we don't think this is the case in so highly a political and bureaucratic environment as schools. Clout is both a personal and an administrative phenomenon and many outstandingly skilled evaluators will lack the clout even to initiate and/or successfully follow through on the evaluation process itself. Without access to a program, it is difficult to obtain the basic data needed for its evaluation. Thus, I would say that strong administrative support is a critical element of evaluation report impact in a LEA. This power of good old fashioned clout comes from a just right match of skills, circumstances, context, experience, technical expertise, personal relationships and, sometimes, even luck!

(Respondent: FLORALINE STEVENS)
The impact of evaluation reports depends on what has been evaluated. The perfunctory Compensatory Education/Title I Reports have had no impact on LEA policy and practice; however, this will change because the content of the report was changed. We are now conducting an ethnographic study of successful reading results in Title I schools. LEA policy persons have expressed much interest in the outcomes. It is anticipated that the information will be widely disseminated and used for staff development. Any evaluation that provides insights into successful teaching practices has great value because our new superintendent has

five goals for improving the school district and higher achievement will be an index to indicate better achievement among the students. There is an excitement and a push in the LEA to promote and enhance the conditions for principals to be better instructional leaders, teachers to provide quality instruction, and for students to learn more. Because of these elements, any information that may prove helpful is sought and is welcome. As the evaluation reports in the district provide the kinds of information that are needed and are useful, they will have impact. The LEA administrators have been in the district long enough to know and aid the top level administrators. They now seek aid from the research and evaluation office. The office is located in the administration complex and therefore personnel and materials are immediately accessible to LEA administrators. The quality of the information provided in court-ordered evaluations or federal compliance reports have had impact. The political ramifications of the reports, not the scientific quality, have generated attention although the scientific quality (evaluation methodology) has been excellent for many of the reports.

(Questioner: CAROL H. WEISS)
3. What does the looming cutback in resources portend for the future of LEA evaluation? If budgets have to be cut, will evaluation be among the first functions to be terminated? Or will superintendents and others turn to evaluation to help in budget-cutting decisions?

(Respondent: STEVEN FRANKEL)
If evaluation groups configure themselves like us, with about half the resources going towards management studies and audits, the future is rather rosy. The most conservative boards and superintendents will support an operation if it promises to return several times its cost in savings. Further, if the staff and resources needed for the management studies and audits are within the span of control of the research director, those same talents and techniques can be applied to the instructional side of the house as well. As evidence of this, our operation has been growing at about 10-15% a year, despite declining enrollment and a conservative Board dedicated to putting every possible dollar into teachers and books.

As intimated by the question, this only occurs if the research operation is willing and able to assist the Board and superintendent in their budget cutting decisions by providing them with unequivicable data showing which operations are performing as expected, and which are not.

From another perspective, the future of LEA evaluation units is even better. The way things are going, we may soon be the only game in town.

The cuts in Federal support don't hurt us as they do the labs, centers, and consulting organizations because most of us never saw those dollars anyway; except to do studies the world can easily do without such as the Title I and Head Start evaluations. Similarly, we are now coming out of the period of enrollment declines, and therefore will not be suffering the same cutbacks as universities will begin experiencing as the drop in the birth curve starts affecting them.

Therefore, I think that there is a good chance that the school system based research operations will become stronger and increasingly influential in the next decade.

(Respondent: FREDA HOLLEY)
LEA evaluations will undoubtedly suffer along with the rest of education in the current cutbacks. Evaluation is rarely of any real help in budget-cutting decisions; we are far from the coverage and exactness that would be helpful in fact. Our district faces a cut from about $3 million in funds for desegregation, innovative programs, library services and so forth. Probably the highest priority service for continuation at the moment is that of bus monitors. But this is really a value judgment decision since who can really do an evaluative comparison between bus monitors and library books. Even if formal evaluation offices disappeared, however, I personally believe that education is never likely to be quite the same as it was before our hey day and that evaluation skills will continue to be important in education.

(Respondent: CARL NOVAK)
This is a decision that will have to be made on a district by district basis. The outcome will (or at least should) depend upon the extent to which evaluation

results (or the services provided by the evaluators) have become an integral part of the decision making process. If evaluation is perceived by the Superintendent as window dressing, something to be done primarily for public relations reasons, then evaluation probably will be cut. However, if the services provided by evaluators (however they are classified) are considered to be useful and cost effective, then evaluation will probably continue to be funded.

Our evaluation unit has been fortunate in that the Superintendent and the Director of the Educational Service Unit #18 have both been extremely supportive. Decision making within the district is decentralized and the district is structured to allow the free flow of information. However, the Superintendent recently announced his retirement. The change in the superintendency coupled with increased fiscal pressures caused by a State lid and further reduction in federal programs are going to make the next 12 to 16 months interesting. At this time I am still confident in the future of the evaluation unit in our district. however we are currently making a concerted effort to make sure that the evaluation team activities are consistent with district priorities.

(Respondent: ELLEN PECHMAN)
In our district, we are not sufficiently geared up as an evaluation unit to provide concrete evaluation data for budget cutting purposes, as such. In the next year or two, however, if we have the opportunity to build our management information system, it is my hope that a good deal of planning data will be available to enable us to analyze where the system's needs are greatest and where funds and support can be best spent. This is more data based planning than evaluation, but the tools of the evaluation researcher are obviously critical to the effective use of a management information system.

Regarding the use of evaluation reports as the basis of budget cutting decisions, my concern is that this is a very negative use of evaluation--and one which should be avoided. If evaluation processes and reports become instruments for budget and program surgery, program people understandably develop masterful means of avoiding the operation entirely! Already too many people think of evaluation in a negative sense and, if it is used mainly as the tool to eliminate programs, we will continue to have a hard time eliciting people's commitment and participation in the evaluation process.

As I write this response, we are in budget time in the district and my proposed budget includes requests for staffing and testing increases. It will be interesting to see the reaction of the budget committee. Our recently appointed superintendent has expressed a verbal commitment to planning and evaluation, but it is unclear if he appreciates what good evaluation requires in manpower, dollars, and, most important, in administrative commitment and oversight. My experience is that many people who support evaluation do so from the arm chair and the translation of support to action does not always happen.

(Respondent: FLORALINE STEVENS)
This year in anticipation of the Title I funding cutbacks, the number of Title I evaluators was reduced from 17 to four. However, most of these evaluators were placed in other units of the research and evaluation office. It was recommended by a committee of school principals that the Title I evaluation budget be cut while at the same time the principals were still asking for evaluation services--a paradox! When Proposition 13 became a law in California, evaluation services were

drastically reduced; however, court-ordered evaluation and federal compliance reports increased the need for staffing above the original numbers. The initial reaction of the superintendent is to cut and then when the information needed is not available, some positions or whole units within our office are restored. There is another evaluation unit that reports to the Board of Education that provides information on budget cuts.

(Questioner: CAROL H. WEISS)
4. What advice would you give to an evaluator beginning work in an LEA?

(Respondent: STEVEN FRANKEL)
Come in with as broad an academic background as possible. Our ideal candidate has a strong background in measurement and statistics; a good background in accounting and finance; and is adept in FORTRAN and using statistical packages such as SPSS. By far the best minor area to have at this time is business administration, with at least two courses each in accounting, finance, management, and operations research.

In terms of previous work experience, we insist that half our hires have relatively recent public school teaching experience. The others we like to get from consulting companies or from particularly strong university based research groups such as Pitt's LRDC.

Learn to write clearly and simply, and to meet deadlines. The easiest way to get fired is to be a poor or a slow writer. Consider meeting deadlines your personal religion, and especially in your first two years on the job, do anything necessary to meet your deadlines.

Finally, welcome to the most relevant world of research. We think you'll have fun, and you will be able to see the results of your efforts relatively quickly. That's more than most consulting company or Federally based researchers can say.

(Respondent: FREDA HOLLEY)
Try to understand the context; try to understand who and what you are doing evaluation for and how to have impact. Bring the best technical skills to the job you possibly can. Remember that the U.S. public education system is in extreme danger and be ready to do what you can to make it as effective as it can be.

(Respondent: CARL NOVAK)
The greatest challenge facing a new evaluator is establishing credibility with administrators in the district. In part the new evaluator's credibility will initially depend on the credibility of the evaluation unit or the credibility of past evaluators. This natural transfer can be either an asset or a liability. A major portion will however depend on how successful the evaluator is in (1) focusing evaluation on key aspects of programs, and (2) establishing a mutually supportive working relationship with key administrators and other personnel. I can almost guarantee that in our district the credibility will not come from the use of sophisticated techniques nor scholarly reports. The key elements are the extent to which the evaluation is perceived as useful (or potentially useful) and the evaluator is seen as helpful. The attitude with which the evaluator approaches his charge is very important. If the evaluator is seen as concerned and trying to make a contribution the battle is half won. If the evaluator is seen as aloof, pedantic, etc., he or she makes the task much more difficult. Consequently my advice to the evaluator would be to spend at least as much time and effort trying to understand the dynamics of the program and relating the study and results to those dynamics as he or she does on developing the evaluation design, developing instruments, analyzing data or writing reports. If you have questions about the program don't be afraid to ask. However, and this is very important, remember your role; do not allow program staff to call the "shots" in the evaluation. Your role is to conduct the evaluation, fulfill this role.

(Respondent: ELLEN PECHMAN)
Prepare to be inventive, thick-skinned, warmly tenatious and, as one of my evaluators quipped, "Be sure that your health insurance includes a psychiatric plan!"

In a somewhat more serious vein, I think the new evaluator needs to learn quickly that evaluation impact occurs constantly and indirectly. Every action of the evaluator molds the outcomes of the information obtained and the eventual use of the data. The smallest interpersonal mismatch can have the most dramatic effects on the availability of the very information needed to conduct the evaluation. A program which wants to sabotage an evaluation can easily and creatively do so.

(Respondent: FLORALINE STEVENS)
Because this LEA is a large urban school district, there is a large pool of evaluation applicants from which to choose. The tendency of some is to be satisfied and not to increase their professional skills. My advice for those persons who want to be indispensible is continue to accumulate skills particularly in the area of computer programming and data systems as well as advanced research design. Another area to continue to study is ethnographic or qualitative evaluation techniques. If there is a need to cut staff, it will be those persons with multiple skills who will be continued in their positions.

(Questioner: BRUCE THOMPSON)

1. At a recent AERA annual meeting Scriven suggested that evaluation would become a more potent influence on policy as more evaluators moved from staff positions into line positions. Do you believe that evaluators are increasingly moving into line positions within Local Education Agencies? How do you expect the careers of evaluators to fare in LEA settings in the future?

(Respondent: STEVEN FRANKEL)

I don't think that there is any question that evaluation will be increasingly valued, and become a more potent influence, as more evaluators get promoted from managing the evaluation unit to managing a wider range of functions. If nothing else, the former evaluators will be comfortable with evaluation techniques and will be able to tell the difference between high quality and mediocre work. This in turn should lead to better management of research units and the production of better quality products which the former evaluation directors will know fully how to exploit.

As for how often these promotions are occurring, I'm not really sure. In most school systems, assuming a much wider range of responsibilities--including line ones--is usually the only way for the director of the evaluation department to become an assistant or associate superintendent. Therefore, given the high level of competency and the awareness of system wide problems which many evaluation directors possess, one would expect that these promotions are occurring. Of course, Stu Rankin here on the platform is one example; Mike Say and Bill Webster are others; and Jim Jacobs in Cincinatti has made it all the way to Superintendent. How often this is happening in smaller districts I can't say.

Evaluators' careers should do very well in LEA's. As mentioned in a previous response, this may well be the fastest growth area in educational research since it's not dependent upon federal funding and the worst effects of the decline in births has already taken its toll. Also, being in charge of a school system's evaluation unit--especially in a large district--provides a perspective on a school system's operations that is usually only available to persons with the rank of assistant superintendent and above. This in turn should lead both to promotional opportunites, and to very strong feelings of job satifaction and self-worth. All I can say is that in our shop, despite the fact we pay at least 20% less than the consulting firms and government agencies which permeate Washington, we have not had an opening for a full time research position in the past two years. In fact even before the federal funds dried up--we were getting several calls a week from experienced and respected researchers interested in coming to work for us.

(Respondent: FREDA HOLLEY)

Although I am aware that a few key members of the R & E community have moved into superintendancies, I do not perceive that this constitutes much of a trend. For one thing, most evaluators or researchers do not meet certification requirements that permit them to move into line administrative positions. thus, the numbers are not there for significant impact. Also, I'm not sure that evaluators in line positions will behave all that differently from the sharp administrators we already have out there. I believe that the incorporation of key evaluation skills and concepts in administrative training programs will be much more the key to the long range change of school administration.

(Respondent: CARL NOVAK)
This is a difficult question. I think it is too early to tell what happens to "old" evaluators (in terms of career progression) because the movement is too young. I do know of some evaluators who have moved into what I consider to be "line" positions; however, I'm not sure of the circumstances associated with these moves. There could be any number of reasons for the moves including being fed up with evaluation, increased job security, career advancement, or mandatory transfer as a result of cutbacks. It is also important to remember that many individuals who initially held evaluation positions in LEAs were not trained as evaluators. The fact that they became evaluators is prima facie evidence of a deviant career pattern.

I also feel that individuals who have been trained in evaluation and have functioned successfully as an evaluator in a supportive environment will be reluctant to voluntarily transfer to line positions. I can understand why this might happen (money, job security, prestige, etc.) however I don't think it will be normal. The orientation and working conditions are too different. Lack of opportunity for career advancement for evaluators is and will continue to be a problem at least in smaller districts.

(Respondent: ELLEN PECHMAN)
It is very difficult to generalize on this issue from my experience. In New Orleans, it would be unlikely for an evaluator to be put into a line position since our evaluators have limited school administrative experience and line staff are generally selected from the school site administrators' pool. Also, I find that people with the instinct for work with data analysis and the technical expertise required of a good evaluator often aren't comfortable making the pragmatic and political compromises required of line staff. Many of us who are evaluators are good at presenting the data for substantive arguments, but we don't much care for the rapid fire decision-making--often without factual data--often required of the line staff.

Regarding the next career step for our evaluators, I think those who leave our evaluation unit will likely move to similar kinds of research jobs in other settings, perhaps in other governmental agencies, planning settings, or in research units in business or industry. However, we are really too small a group and we have existed for too short a period for me to generalize with confidence regarding career ladders.

(Respondent: FLORALINE STEVENS)
Only the top administrators of research and evaluation offices are moving into line positions. As you note the titles of persons responsible for research and evaluation offices, you sometimes see listed "consultant"; however, more are directors, executive directors, assistant superintendents and even associate superintendents. The number of evaluation staff positions appear to be decreasing as educational resources dwindle and the mandates for ongoing full-blown evaluation reports are no longer necessary. There will always be a need for evaluation in LEA's but many of these needs may be fulfilled by ad hoc external evaluators instead of ongoing full-time staff.

(Questioner: BRUCE THOMPSON)

2. In a 1976 book (Policy Analysts in the Bureaucracy), Arnold Meltsner suggested that evaluators could be categorized into four types, as follows:

TABLE I
Typology of Evaluators

Type	Skill Levels	Characteristics Identified By Meltsner
Technician	High technical, low political	Motivated by opportunity to do research; judges success by peer approval; main resource is command of detail; oriented toward the long-term; sees analysis as an end in itself
Politician	High political, low technical	Motivated by desire for personal influence; judges success by approval of superiors who are perceived as being influential; main resources are communication and coordination skills; oriented toward short-term; sees analysis as a means for personal influence
Entrepreneur	High technical, high political	Motivated by opportunity to pursue policy preferences; judges success by policy impacts; main resources are knowledge and communication skills; balanced time perspective; sees analysis as a means for policy influence and helping people
Pretender	Low technical, low political	(Characteristics not identified by Meltsner)

From EEPA, 1980, 2(2), p. 60.

In your own experience, does this typology make sense? What is wrong with it, if anything? What's right?

(Respondent: STEVEN FRANKEL)
Without seeing the typology in context, it's difficult to comment upon it definitively. However, working just from the display provided to us, it raises some questions.

Let's look at management of evaluation units first. To successfully manage an evaluation unit in a large school system, one must have both of the sets of characteristics which the chart lists for politicians and entrepreneurs. In fact, I would say that it is this combination of characteristics that best describes the most successful managers. This immediately leads to two problems with the typology:

1) The display implies that the politician and the entrepreneurial characteristics are mutually exclusive; or at least that one is dominant over the other. I would argue that these often go together; and that they are so intertwined that they cannot be separated.

2) The typology differentiates politicians from entrepreneurs in relation to their skills by saying that politicians are often "low technical" whereas entrepreneurs are "high technical." I think this is clearly wrong. Having worked for four educational consulting firms, and having been an officer of one of the most successful, I would say that almost invariably the most successful entrepreneurs are either "low technical" in almost every sense of the word; or else, they have made a conscious effort not to employ their

technical background, no matter how well trained they are. Why? Because the truly successful entrepreneur is always thinking ahead to how the study results can be exploited, or where he/she is taking the organization next. Such people don't have time to worry about technical matters. That's what they pay their staffs to do.

Conversely the reverse is often true of individuals classified by the typology as politicians. Often these are people who are very technically oriented and superbly trained, and they achieve their personal influence by always being able to provide a sound technical answer that is relevant to the issue at hand.

Thus I think that generalizations regarding the possession of technical ability are dangerous. The composite politician/entrepreneur, which I claim makes the best manager, does not need much technical ability. Further, even if he/she possesses it, exercise of these skills will often be counterproductive for the organization when viewed from the opportunity cost perspective.

Looking below the management level, I think that breaking into education evaluation as a profession is most easily done by those which the typology classifies as technicians. That's what most research directors want when they make hiring decisions. Perhaps this is because the successful politicians/entrepreneurs must depend upon the technicians to do most of the actual work. However, to go beyond the journeyman level, into management, I would argue that this perspective is best left behind.

As for pretenders, don't knock them. They are needed to collect and edit data, to compile statistics and make routine computer runs, and to do the day-to-day tasks that the other three types are resistant to doing. The trick is, you have to be sure that their salary doesn't grow faster than their worth to the organization. A lot of companies have priced themselves out of the market by not paying attention to this fact.

(Respondent: FREDA HOLLEY)
Typologies such as this may be interesting and have some academic value; however, they are not very helpful in a practical sense.

For one thing, such a classification schema has the implication of permanence or rigidity that is really not present in human behavior. That is, an insect can be classified permanently as "danaus plexipus" or a plant as a "carissa grandiflora" and the characteristics identified. But a person is rarely so easy to pin down as "high political, low technical." Let me use myself as an example. I am confident that I would have been classified as "low political, high technical" when I entered this arena using this schema, but over time I've learned that politics are so crucial that I've moved more in that direction and acquired political skills.

More helpful, I think, is a schema whereby skills that are important in evaluation are identified along with the consequences for performance that likely follow from the various performance levels on that skill. It is helpful to understand the role of political skill in the evaluator's work. Such a schema can be very useful in a practical way then for training, for assessing how an evaluation activity is likely to proceed given certain staff skill levels, and for deciding what

supplementary resources may be necessary if policy impact is to result.

(Respondent: CARL NOVAK)
The typology is an interesting one and provides a potentially insightful perspective for classifying evaluators. It is easy to think of examples of evaluators who have a political orientation. Unfortunately, it's all too easy to think of "evaluators" who are neither technically competent nor politically astute. The entrepreneur classification represents the ideal or standard. If an evaluator is to be successful he or she must be technically competent and politically insightful.

The strength of the typology is that it points out two very important dimensions of evaluation (1) producing technically sound information, and (2) communicating that information and influencing policy. The typology poignantly makes the point that either by itself is insufficient. The weakness of the typology is that it treats each dimension as a dichotomy. Both are continua. A second problem is that the descriptors "high" and "low" are relative. What is, by evaluators' standards, low technical, is probably from a principal's frame of reference highly technical. Similarly high political may mean one thing to an evaluator and another thing to an assistant superintendent or personnel dealing simultaneously with the board of education and the teacher's association.

(Respondent: ELLEN PECHMAN)
The Meltsner typology is an intriguing one that most certainly describes various "types" one finds in school bureaucracies, but I don't think there are enough parallels between school systems and the policy planning agencies to make Meltsner's framework fit school systems well. Evaluators tend to be teachers or teacher types and these "types" aren't described by Meltsner's framework. Once evaluators become involved in the bureaucratic environment they adopt various organizational behavior patterns. However, I think their technical and political styles fall more on a continuum, with dimensions extending from pretender to some well-developed combination of political and technical, than within a typology.

(Respondent: FLORALINE STEVENS)
In my experience as an evaluator in an LEA this does <u>not</u> make sense. All descriptions appear to be negatively oriented. I really resent the titles of technician, politician, entrepreneur, and pretender to describe a body of professionals, just as doctors and lawyers resent the terms of "hacks" and "quacks." My personal belief is that most evaluation professionals enter the field because of a strong interest in discovery and not for monetary gain. I have met few evaluators who have become rich or the top administrator of an LEA. In many instances the position is a hot seat or necessitates walking a tight rope. Technicians, politicians, entrepreneurs and pretenders are "too smart" to be in the situation described.

(Questioner: BRUCE THOMPSON)

3. For several years the literature on evaluation use suggested that LEA administrators "underuse" evaluation information. For example, Kilbourne and DeGracie (1979 AERA paper, p. 12) suggest that:

> All LEAs, with possibly a few exceptions, can point to their volumes of research and evaluation verbiage setting on the shelves of district administrators being used for little else than a door stop, swatting flies, or any of the other various and sundry purposes for which research is used in the public schools.

However, recently a more optimistic tone regarding use levels has become popular (e.g., ED 170 345). For example, it has been suggested that there are several types of use, including use which affects administrators' "ways of thinking about programs" rather than directly affecting specific policy decisions (ED 199 271, pp. 11-17). Does this distinction between types of use make sense to you? What are the most typical forms of use in your job setting?

(Respondent: STEVEN FRANKEL)

If evaluation results are under used, it is usually the fault of the evaluators and their managers.

First, every study should be presold. It should not be done unless there is a demand for its results, and a definite chance that it may serve a useful purpose.

Second, every study should be designed so as to maximize the chance that it will provide administrators with information which they can act upon. If it becomes apparent that this goal cannot be met, the study should be quickly cut back or cancelled. Third, the results must be presented in a manner which is both readable and useful; and it should be oriented towards policy makers and citizens. In our case, this increasingly means that our reports follow the format of going from no more than a 1-2 page introduction which cites why the study was conducted and who asked for it, to a policy oriented executive summary, and then to a detailed discussion of results. We then put everything else--including the study design, sampling plan, instruments, and analyses--into technical appendices. In a large study we bind these appendices into a separate volume. The value of this approach is proven by the fact that for a typical study, we often "sell out" our initial run of 300 copies of the main report, whereas the 50 copies of the technical appendices often go begging. We also produce the executive summary under separate cover, and demand for this has often led to more than 500 being printed.

I don't like the idea of trying to use evaluation reports to "change the way administrators think about programs" as opposed to trying to impact upon specific policy decisions. I would view the former as the coward's way out, and would much rather try to produce reports which are so relevant that the administrator can only ignore them at his/her own peril.

(Respondent: FREDA HOLLEY)

I concur with the basic premise here that evaluation use is not direct and easy to observe. Neither, however, can it be captured with any other single notion. Rather, use is determined by a myriad number of factors which create all sorts of use configurations, any one of which is as likely to resemble the next as one

snowflake is to resemble another. In our district, some uses of evaluation findings are immediate and direct, some emerge after the initial findings as "truths" belonging to the lore of the district. I feel very upbeat about what can happen based on our experience. I think it would be terribly important to education if superintendents and school boards could be convinced of what evaluation can do.

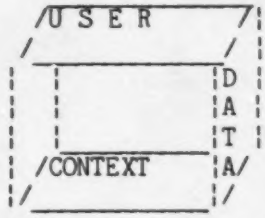
(Respondent: CARL NOVAK)
It is very difficult to identify when specific policy decisions are actually made and even more difficult to sort out all the bits of information that contribute to that decision. To me, the alternative ways of explaining how evaluation results are used make sense. Administrators who are held responsible for the decisions they make and for the outcomes associated with those decisions are not going to default that responsibility by deferring to the results of a single evaluation, particularly if the findings suggest an action that runs counter to past experience or intuition. However, the outcomes of the evaluation should cause the administrator to think differently about the decision than if he or she had no knowledge about the outcomes. Just because the results are negative toward the most appealing decision alternative doesn't mean that the alternative won't be selected. It should change the decision making process and the likelihood that the impact of the decision will be more closely monitored. The fact that an evaluation was conducted, irrespective of the results, probably changes the way decision makers think about a program. Use, of course, is also affected by a number of other factors, some of which are identified in question 2.

The typical format for presenting results in our district includes oral presentation of the results to the superintendent's cabinet (or some decision making body), accompanied by an executive summary or other handouts (for references), and followed by an unstructured discussion of the implication of the results for the program. The format is designed to promote use. A fantasy of mine regarding use of results is that policy decisions and administrative action are either justified in terms of available evaluation results or if the decision or action is inconsistent with the results a compelling rationale is developed as to why that particular decision or action was felt to be appropriate. This is still mainly a fantasy.

(Respondent: ELLEN PECHMAN)
In a recent presentation at NIE, Mary Kennedy described school administrative behavior as based upon administrators' "working knowledge." Working knowledge, according to Kennedy, consists of things we believe to be true; it is intuitive, sensitive to change and relevant to the working environment. "Working knowledge" refers to the technical information a person uses, molded and recast into the language and circumstance of that individual. Kennedy has found that school people uniquely apply technical information in a form that is modified according to their special circumstances, past experiences and interpretations of the facts they observe. Thus, to the extent that the data reported in an evaluation are consistent with the working knowledge of the user, it may influence any number of aspects of an administrator's behavior. Certainly the rational approach to evaluation use--evaluation takes place, is reported, data are considered and a decision is made--is the least likely example of how evaluations are actually used in New Orleans. The extreme opposite example of this traditional view of evaluation use occurs often--a program will finally get under way or will create its own evaluation data to avoid being evaluated. Is this evaluation use?

It seems there are two concerns: (1) the theoretical problem of defining evaluation use for the purposes of research and greater understanding of evaluation behavior and (2) the practical question of what kind of data can be used to improve educational decision-making (if any); and how should it be presented?

I am hard pressed to conceive of a future where we will be able to develop a neat framework or typology of evaluation use that describes the phenomenon which occurs regarding evaluations in schools in a practical and useful way. On one hand, I certainly think it is necessary for us to continue to explore the numerous elements and actors which interact in decision-making in schools so that we can improve the quality and effectiveness of the data that are used to make important educational plans. I am currently thinking about evaluation use in terms of a cubic matrix in which the user, the evaluation context, and the data form three sides of the cubic structure. Each of the three structural elements has numerous subelements which cross and create numerous new "types" of use. The framework I am describing might look like the one below:



I am hard-pressed to describe the typical form of evaluation in our district, since each evaluation constitutes a slightly different example of type of use. Use is a highly individual experience. One of our key administrators recently told us that he believed evaluation reports should present the data, report the statistical significance, and state the "educational significance" of the report. But he emphasized that he didn't believe the evaluator should offer any recommendations or conclusions about programs. How or if to use evaluation information, according to this administrator, is entirely the decision-maker's prerogative. If this is the common view, the issue of improving use may be out of the evaluator's hands unless we attempt to trick people into use of our findings through skillful public relations gimmicks.

(Respondent: FLORALINE STEVENS)
Evaluations mandated by remote (state/federal) agencies generally have little effect. I refer specifically to compensatory education and Title I evaluations and their reports. However, compliance evaluation reports or court-mandated evaluation reports which expect the data to point out areas of need, areas receiving some kind of mediation, and areas successfully dealt with are used frequently and meaningfully. For instance, my school district is under a court-ordered desegregation plan. The court has ordered the evaluation of the district's programs which were planned to ameliorate the harms of racial isolation. Program personnel have used the report information to satisfy the court as well as to make changes to improve the programs. This is also true of the LAU evaluation reports to meet the compliance issues coming from the Office for Civil Rights.

It has been my experience that process/progress/formative evaluation reports have been judged to be useful to program developers and implementers. Summative evaluations--number crunchers--are viewed as useless or too late for impact.

(Questioner: BRUCE THOMPSON)

4. Several persons have suggested that evaluators would be more effective if they dropped their cloak of unachievable objectivity and actively tried to optimize use of evaluation. It has even been suggested that evaluation really ought to be considered persuasion. How far do you think evaluators should go in trying to optimize evaluation use? What dangers are inherent in the various decisions which can be taken in this regard?

(Respondent: STEVEN FRANKEL)

My answer to this question is largely contained in my response to the previous question. Unless we try to optimize evaluation use, we will not survive. Further, if we can't optimize use, we don't deserve to survive.

As to how far one should go, I would say very far. The first thing to do is to get your Board to implement a policy stating that: 1) All results from evaluation activities must be made public and distributed to both the Board and to key citizens and newspapers in the community; and 2) that after safeguards are taken regarding individual confidentiality, all computer files and printouts will be made available to anyone on a cost reimbursalble basis. How does this relate to creating a demand for evaluation results? Simple. As noted earlier, in a well run operation no evaluation should be conducted unless a reasonable level of controversy exists regarding the program. What this policy does is insure that individuals on both sides of the issue will have have full access to the study's results and recommendations. This in turn creates a built-in demand for the results from the day the study is initiated. It also creates a demand for additional studies as people learn that no matter which side of an issue a study eventually favors, it will produce some results useful to both sides.

The major danger that must be avoided is confounding staff with line responsibilities. For evaluators to remain objective, they cannot be responsible for implementing their recommendations. The minute they get caught in the trap of doing so, they have co-opted themselves for future studies in that program area. As long as they assess, recommend, and criticize they are fine; the minute they begin showing others how something should be done, they are in deep trouble.

Another danger is in being reluctant to change your mind, or admit that you were wrong. A given percent of the time, taking the advice of evaluators will lead to disappointing results. At this point, all you can do is point out, or hope that the superintendent and Board remember, your overall win vs. loss record, and admit your mistake.

(Respondent: FREDA HOLLEY)

Few experienced evaluators I know wear cloaks of any type; tattered rags of hard-won experience maybe! I belong to the "persuasion" ranks, but "persuasion" to include evaluation findings, research findings, and in fact all available information in educational decisions. I do not believe it our role to make or demand decisions which conform to any particular source of information. However, it is folly not to recognize that today's world of school administration and instruction is in a state of information overload. Therefore, it requires competition and persuasion simply to get the ear and eye of the audience, to have them attend to and understand the findings. I personally am pleased to see educators who can weigh evaluation results with political factors, with intuition, and with other sources of information to arrive at formal judgments.

Decisions made with a lack of knowledge are the real ignomity of education. Where they occur and I had knowledge that I failed to communicate, I share the ignomity and the burden of responsibility.

(Resonent: CARL NOVAK)
After carefully considering the question I now feel that it deserves an unqualifiable and unexplanable "possibly."

While complete objectivity might be unobtainable, openness is not. The most satisfactory evaluation (most useful, most credible, etc.) is one in which a large number of people have had input. Initial involvement of program and/or administrative staff in the study eliminates many of the problems in disseminating the results of the study. More importantly, familiarity with the evaluation increases understanding of the effort and the relationship of the evaluation and the program. It also results in the early identification of controversial aspects of the evaluation (in time to resolve conflicts before the results become available and ideally even before the data are collected). Lastly, earlier involvement increases the likelihood that the results can and will be used.

Early involvement of interested parties in the evaluation puts the evaluator under pressure to justify choices in design, instruments, etc., and to give due consideration to competitive points of view. It does not change the evaluator's role in the reporting process. Evaluators can and often do have very different perspectives of the program they are evaluating than do teachers and administrators. The evaluator is responsible for representing his viewpoint as fairly and faithfully as possible. Persuasion is inevitable in the reporting process. The evaluator ethically must represent his viewpoint but she or he must do so as openly and as fairly as possible. He must always be concerned about his motives. There is danger that the evaluator promotes his point of view for the wrong reason or with an inappropriate constituency, i.e., worries more about personal power and prestige (winning) than in helping the decision makers achieve a more balanced understanding of their program.

In summary, evaluators should promote the use of evaluation results but they must do so as openly and ethically as possible and for the right reasons. They must be perceived as helpful rather than as advocates or adversaries. Continuing relationships with constituencies make openness, candor and mutual respect indispensable.

(Respondent: ELLEN PECHMAN)
Over the years I have lost the illusion that there is such a thing as an "objective fact" in the school world. Instead I have begun to think in terms of numerous possible objectivities. Too frequently the same set of data lead to entirely different conclusions, recommendations, or determinations regarding the actions implied. Thus, I believe that evaluation is always persuasion. In the best circumstances, the effort to persuade a potential user that the data accurately reflect the key occurences in the evaluated setting is worthwhile because the data are, indeed, accurate. If optimizing use means improving the working knowledge of the user, the evaluator should go a long way. But when data or events are distorted out of proportion or made so simple that the event described no longer resembles what occurred, we have gone too far. Dangers occur only when extremes are dominant. Neither evaluators nor their data are omnipotent; claiming objective purity or drawing conclusions without sufficient

data-based support are both significant professional mistakes evaluators can make. If evaluators have the personal skills and the intellectual integrity to determine where, and when to take a stand--using their data honestly and well--use of evaluation will occur as well as the use context will allow.

(Respondent: FLORALINE STEVENS)
In my school district there is already much interaction between evaluators and program staff because most of the evaluation is formative/process-oriented. There is no need to wear an objective cloak but to be professional and open about various biases or values held. Evaluation should not be that of persuasion but it should point up discrepancies between plan and reality. It is still up to the program persons to decide what to do about any discrepancies. Evaluators should step back after reporting the information in the report. I do not believe they should "sell" their recommendations. I honestly do not believe that a person can eventually do a summative evaluation of what he/she has planned if he/she has "persuaded" program people to follow a certain recommendation in a particular way. This is the danger when an evaluator persuades or sells a certain step. There is less danger to recommend based upon a finding and leave to the program person the plan to develop and implement as a response to the recommendation, if the recommendation is believed to be good or valid.

(Questioner: BRUCE THOMPSON)

5. National surveys of LEA evaluation personnel indicate that many LEA evaluators have not taught. In your opinion, would lack of teaching experience drastically lessen evaluators' credibility in the eyes of most LEA administrators?

(Respondent: STEVEN FRANKEL)

I would say that it certainly doesn't help it, but a lack of teaching experience is certainly not fatal. In our operation we have publicly committed to alternate in our hiring between those with teaching backgrounds and those with consulting experience. This has worked very well, both from an operational and public relations standpoint. Also, we have tried to make our teaching hires from within the school system. This has permitted us to hire a Black math teacher that we have trained as a researcher; was the former financial account manager for all special education programs who we now use to manage evaluation contracts in that area; and a former Fullbright scholar who had to give up teaching because her health no longer permitted her to stand in front of a class. Interestingly of our three managers, only one has public school teaching experience.

However, I would be just as worried if an evaluation unit was staffed completely by those with teaching backgrounds. I think that having persons with business and/or consulting backgrounds is just as important as having people with teaching backgrounds. In fact, I would say that more evaluation shops in school systems suffer from a lack of nonteaching backgrounds, than from not having sufficient personnel with teaching experience.

(Respondent: FREDA HOLLEY)

If evaluators demonstrate a lack of experience or reveal a lack of experience whether of teaching or of administration, it will naturally hurt their credibility. So will any lack of evaluation expertise. So will dressing inappropriately or maintaining an aloof attitude.

I have had evaluation staff without teaching experience, however, who were highly credible and highly regarded. Again, there are no invariable rules about such things. Personally, I had brief teaching experience at both the elementary and secondary level. I had experience also teaching more than one subject. I believe that this experience was valuable and that it has helped me understand many evaluation situations and problems with less effort. On the other hand, I am aware that conditions today are not like those in which my experience occurred nor does experience in one type situation necessarily transfer to another. Again, what I'm saying is that perceptiveness, empathy, and intelligence compensate for lack of experience; but experience will be no substitute for the former characteristics.

(Respondent: CARL NOVAK)

No, not lack of teaching experience per se. Particularly not in the long run. Credibility comes from (1) effective evaluator-client relationships, which in turn depends upon sensitivity, a sharing of purpose (commonality of purpose) and an understanding of program/school dynamics, and (2) soundness of methodology. Neither requires teaching experience.

The above statement should not be interpreted to mean the teaching experience is not valuable. I propose that teaching experience can be important. Individuals

who have had successful classroom experience often have a better understanding of the dynamics of the classroom and are more attuned to how schools function. They very often have a different set of values and different attitudes about school than individuals who become evaluators without the benefit of practical educational experience. They frequently have different career goals. Consequently, they are more able to empathize with teachers and establish better relationships with administrators. Simply put, they have more in common and can establish better relationships which lead to improved credibility (if methodology and other factors are held constant). Unfortunately it is also possible that individuals can have teaching without gaining appreciably from it.

In summary, while it is often valuable for an evaluator to have had successful teaching experience, it is more important that they have good interpersonal skills, are perceptive about organizational dynamics and have good technical/methodological backgrounds. Teaching experience won't compensate for lack of competence or inappropriate attitudes.

(Respondent: ELLEN PECHMAN)
One of the major qualities an evaluator needs is an ability to comprehend the context evaluated. Without a complete understanding of the people, the situation and the cross current of the events to be evaluated, it is difficult for an evaluator to ask the kinds of questions needed to obtain the data that accurately reflect the program or situation assessed. Thus, it helps for an evaluator to know how it feels to wear the teacher's or the director's shoes, but such sensitivity may be available through other means than prior experience in the same situation. It largely depends upon a person's insight and general intellectual skills. When evaluators' credibilities are questioned, it is because they have failed upon initial meetings or encounters to represent themselves well. Prior teaching experience will only be necessary to establish credibility if an evaluator is naive in developing the working relationships and fails to convince the client that he or she can represent the program well. I think evaluators need plenty of experience with schools to understand how to find adequate ways to evaluate educational programs, but the precise nature of the experience can vary depending upon the skills of an individual evaluator.

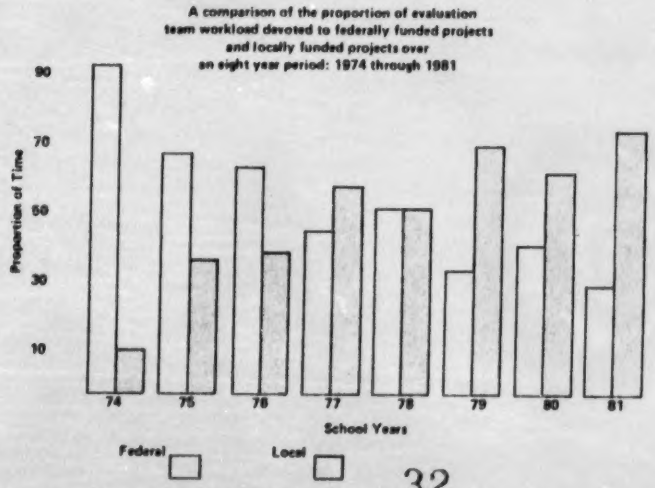
(Respondent: FLORALINE STEVENS)
My response to this question is two-pronged. I believe that in a small school district where the organizational structure or levels are not very complicated or complex, an evaluator without teaching experience could provide the services needed and thus have credibility with most LEA administrators. However, if this person had the assistance of someone knowledgeable about schools working with him/her, the credibility would increase.

Now in a large urban school district with many levels of administration and vast numbers of schools, the task of evaluation becomes quite complex. An evaluator without school experience in this milieu would have a difficult time establishing credibility in the eyes of the LEA administrators in the <u>beginning</u>. However, as the evaluator undertakes more assignments and thus has more contacts with LEA administrators, the experential base will improve. When the evaluator begins to speak the language of LEA administrators, his/her credibility will be in place. This is a process that takes time. Certainly assistance or partnership with an internal LEA person aids in the process. The question is how much <u>time</u> does the evaluator have to accomplish credibility with LEA administrators.

The ESU 18 Evaluation Team was organized in 1973 to provide evaluation support to the federally funded programs being operated within the district that had mandated evaluation requirements. Prior to 1973 the director of each federally funded project had to independently make arrangements for evaluation. Alternatives available to the directors included sharing an evaluator among several projects, individually contracting with an external evaluator (typically either a university professor or a consulting firm) or assigning evaluation responsibility on a part-time basis to a staff member with no formal training or experience in evaluation. The evaluation team made it possible to coordinate the evaluation of all the federally funded projects within the district. In addition to efficiently meeting the mandated evaluation requirements, the evaluation team concept also provided the district with evaluation support for locally funded programs.

Although the evaluation team was organized primarily to evaluate federally funded programs, the role of the team in the district has changed. During 1973-74, the first year the evaluation team was in existence, the team worked almost exclusively on federal programs. Only about ten percent of professional evaluator time was used to support locally funded programs. The proportion of time spent on local programs increased gradually from 1973-74 through 1976-77. During the 1976-77 school year the proportion of time spent on local projects was approximately equal to the proportion of time spent on federally funded projects. Since then the proportion of time on district activities has continued to increase. During the 1980-81 school year the proportion of evaluation team time devoted to support of local projects was approximately 2.5 times greater than the proportion devoted to federally funded projects. A comparison of the proportion of evaluation team workload devoted to federally funded and locally funded projects over the first eight years the evaluation team was in existence is presented graphically in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1



The trend away from the evaluation of federally funded programs toward support of locally funded programs is well documented in Figure I. The reasons for the shift are more complex. In 1973, when the evaluation team was organized, the district was operating five large scale programs that had mandated evaluation requirements. The five were: Title I, Follow Through, two Title III projects (Project Instruct and the Learning Community Schools Project) and Career Education. As the district began the 1981-82 school year only one of those projects, Title I, was still in operation. Several new federal projects have been funded. However, these projects are typically smaller in scope than the projects funded in the early 70's. Therefore, less time is required to evaluate these smaller projects. Another, probably even more important reason for the shift in emphasis is a diversification of the types of services that the evaluation team provides. The team was initially organized to evaluate programs, that is to determine whether or not a program was effective. While it still maintains this capability the team is now also involved in interpretation and development of educational tests, community and staff surveys, information processing and use, support of curriculum studies, and consulting. The diversification of services provides the evaluation team with increased flexibility that enables team members to focus more directly on the information needed by project directors and administrators. For example, during the 1981-82 school year the evaluation team will work on approximately 40 to 45 different projects. Examples of types of projects include (1) Evaluation of such programs as the Hoffman-Gould Reading and Math Program at West Lincoln and Arnold Elementary Schools, the Title IVc preschool handicapped program, the use of microcomputers in the district and evaluation of processes of special interest such as the implementation of the district reading program and progress reporting to parents; (2) Assessment and test related projects such as the development and validation of health assessment tests for both the junior high and elementary schools and the revision of the senior high health waiver test; (3) Community and/or staff surveys such as community equity survey, administration of a school climate profile at Everett Junior High School, and the survey of community attitudes toward Lincoln High School; (4) Support of district curriculum studies such as the Physical Education, Science, Music and Industrial Arts studies; (5) Special studies such as the district math progress study and; (6) General support of central administration to include making enrollment projections for 1982-83, conducting a comprehensive inservice needs assessment of special education and developing a system that uses multiple criteria to select students for Title I.

So far during the 1981-82 school year the evaluation team has published sixteen evaluation reports and a similar number of mini-reports or memoranda for the record. The evaluation team plans to continue to provide evaluation and related support to both federally funded and district programs, and to focus it's efforts on the priorities established for it by the Superintendent's Cabinet.